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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY

A radio talk by Mrs. Charlotte P. Brooks, Home Management Specialist, Burlington, Vermont, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, October 2, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 47 associate NBC radio stations.

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What would it be worth to you to have seven hours a month with which to do exactly what you wish? All of you listeners, I am sure, are interested in getting just as much out of life as possible. You want leisure time to do many interesting and worthwhile things. Some of you may like to read; others may desire time to take long walks, or if you are young and active you may want to go swimming or skiing with your children. If you are a busy homemaker, you no doubt often find that the household tasks seem to dominate you. There are three meals a day to prepare and serve. There are sometimes lunches to put up for the children to take to school as well. There is mending to do. When the endless demands come crowding in, how many of you are just submerged, or snowed under as one of my good Vermont neighbors is always saying.

Well what can be done about it? Well, Benjamin Franklin said, "Employ your time well if thou meanest to gain leisure." This is good advice but when you stop to think of it, there is more involved than just being busy and working hard. Some people work so hard that they do not have a chance to think while other people think so hard that they do not have to work. In which class do you belong?

I believe the secret of getting the most out of 24 hours is to plan carefully just what we are going to do during the day. If a certain piece of work has to be accomplished are you studying to see whether you are doing it in just the best way. Take for example dish washing. How long does it take you to do your dishes now? Some of our Vermont women found that by having a system they saved five minutes each time. Do you think that is too little to bother about? Stop a moment. Five minutes three times a day is fifteen minutes a day or 105 minutes a week. In a month that would be seven whole hours. Some of you may find it easier to get your seven hours by improving your methods of bed making, dusting, or in getting less elaborate meals.

A few of our homemakers have really kept an actual record of all the time spent on a process for three typical days. They have studied to see how they could improve their methods. They found that many homemaking processes could be shortened or eliminated. One woman with a small family saved much energy and some time by putting things necessary to set the table on a tray and making only one trip from her work unit to the dining table. The food was taken in another load. So the whole meal was served with only two trips to the table; before, this task had taken about ten trips. A good illustration of making your head save your heels, don't you think?

I am going to tell you just what one of our homemakers did, quoting her own words. She said: "I took myself in hand on Monday and made mind rule over body for six days. Each morning I made out a list of duties for the

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day. The forenoon's duties could be classed as household duties and these were arranged in the order I was to work them out. Years before this I had experimented intermittently with schedules that estimated the time for doing each task. Usually I found myself several paces behind at noon which was not restful. One time I tried schedules for extra jobs and had this tacked to the wall where I could see it and found it a help. Another time I worked a little on a time schedule to be followed each day. I found this disturbing since I could not always be sweeping the dining-room at 8:45 every morning. That sort of schedule makes me feel in chains, while the type of which I am writing makes me feel out of chains. I timed myself on the forenoon duties (this added zest). I found at the end of the six days that I had spent five hours washing dishes, 2 1/2 hours sweeping, 1 1/2 hours mopping four rooms, 2 1/2 hours cooking, 1 1/2 hours washing, 35 minutes ironing, and one hour putting the house in order. I put 'picking up' on the schedule each day and I discovered that 10 minutes every day did more for my house as to order than half an hour every few days. I haven't learned the secret of a house in perfect order by any means. I only mean that by a few minutes of organized putting in order, there is always the evidence of a pursuit of order. Isn't that enough with a family of children? I kept myself at work afternoons, planning ahead what I should do and I accomplished much more sewing than I otherwise would. I fully intended to schedule the evenings also, for I know it, too would pay."

Many of our Vermont women have tried similar plans and find that they have time to do some of the things they really want to do that make life fuller and richer.

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